

ADDRESS

BY

HON. CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW,

DELIVERED AT

KINGSTON, JULY 30, 1877,

AT THE

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

OF THE

Formation of the State Government

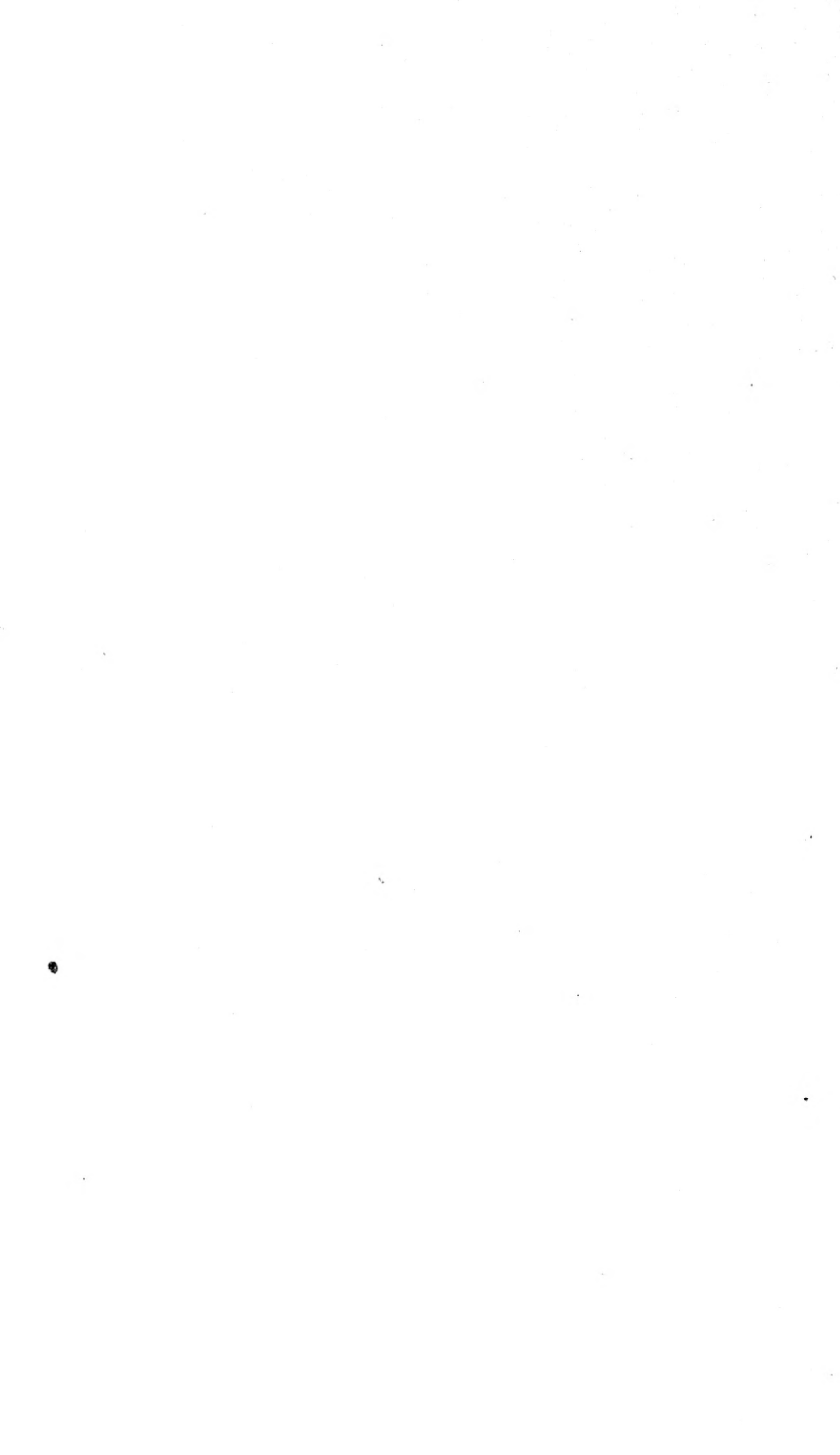
OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK.

ALBANY:

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BY TRANSFER
JUN 3 1910

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FELLOW CITIZENS :

Centennial celebrations crowd upon us. Appropriate commemorations of events of the revolutionary period are the pleasure and duty of the year. Most of them are upon historic battle fields, and recall the feats of arms of our victorious ancestors.

The occasion which calls us together has deeper significance than any battle. It is the anniversary of the declaration and establishment of those principles of constitutional liberty, without which the continental soldier had fought and died in vain. The story of the formation and expression of popular opinion upon popular rights during the colonial era, its development in the Constitution of 1777, and its results for a century, can only be sketched in the limits of an address. Unlike the other colonies, New York had no chartered rights ; there were no limitations on the royal prerogative, and it was only by long and continued struggles that any immunities or privileges were secured.

The Dutch had brought with them from Holland ideas of toleration and liberty, of which that country was for a time the only asylum in the world ; the English colonists were firm in their devotion to representative government.

By every process short of revolution during the early period of the English rule, the arbitrary exactions of the

Royal Governors were resisted, and the demands for an assembly of the people never ceased.

The claim was based upon the natural and inherent rights of a free people.

In 1683, the home government, unable longer to resist, called together an assembly elected by the people. It was the dawn of representative government in New York. The first assembly of our ancestors immediately asserted and enacted into laws the fundamental principles of civil liberty. They passed laws for a triennial assembly; they declared all power to vest in the Governor, Council and people met in general assembly. The privileges of members of Parliament were conferred upon the assembly and its members; their consent must be had to the levy of any tax, and all the guarantees contained in Magna Charta, in the bill of rights, in the habeas corpus act, together with trial by jury, and freedom of conscience in matters of religion, were declared to be the rights, liberties and privileges of the inhabitants of New York. They created the township — that school of self-government — provided the civil divisions upon the plan which has substantially prevailed ever since, and organized superior and inferior courts for the administration of justice. The rights and liberties thus established were often violated and arbitrarily suspended or denied, but every repetition of such tyranny only served to inflame to passionate devotion the people's love of liberty, and to prepare the way for the Declaration of Independence. Ninety-three years after this memorable assertion of popular rights, petition and remonstrance having alike failed, the people determined to peril life and fortune to maintain and enlarge them. In 1776, New York was without a regular government. The

Council was dissolved; the General Assembly prorogued, and the Royal Governor a fugitive under the protection of the guns of the British fleet.

The Provincial Congress sitting in New York owed its existence to the necessities of the times. It was a revolutionary body, its only charter an election by the people. On the 15th of May of that year the Continental Congress, then sitting in Philadelphia, adopted a resolution requesting the respective assemblies and conventions of the United Colonies "where no government sufficient for the exigencies of their affairs had been established, to adopt such government as should in the opinion of the representatives of the people best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents in particular and America in general."

They also recommended the suppression of all authority derived from the crown of Great Britain, and the assumption and exercise of government under authority from the people of the colonies. Of the thirteen colonies, all, except Rhode Island and Connecticut, adopted the recommendation. Their charters did not reserve to the crown the control over or veto upon their internal affairs, and with them such action was unnecessary. Virginia's constitution was first, and New York's fifth, in the order of adoption.

A few days after the passage of this resolution the Provincial Congress met in New York, Gouverneur Morris, a delegate from the county of Westchester, then but twenty-four years of age, signalized his entrance into public life, by urging immediate action, in a speech remarkable for its courage and radicalism, and its strong presentation of the thought of the time. He boldly declared that reconciliation with the mother country was a delusion, and that peace,

liberty and security could only be had by independent government, and moved that a committee be appointed to draw up a plan for the frame of a government.

These men, acting upon well-understood principles, and jealous of every assumption of power, thought that this Congress was not elected for this purpose.

A committee was finally appointed, to whom the whole subject was referred, and on the 27th of May they reported "that the right of framing, creating or remodelling civil governments, is and ought to be in the people," that the old form of government was dissolved and a new form was absolutely necessary, and that, as doubts existed whether the Provincial Congress had power to act, the people of the Colony be called to elect a new Congress specially instructed upon the question of a new government. This report is remarkable as the earliest, clearest and most emphatic declaration of the doctrine of popular sovereignty. It was New York's contribution to American liberty, learned by more than half a century of incessant struggle of the representatives elected by the people with the representatives of the royal power.

The report of the committee was adopted, and on the 31st a series of resolutions, prepared by Mr. Jay, were passed, calling upon the several counties to elect a new body, with power to form a new government, and instructed also upon the question of united colonial independence. In the meantime the seat of war was transferred to New York. On Sunday afternoon of the 30th of June, the British fleet and army under Lord Howe having entered the harbor, the Congress, apprehensive of an attack by the enemy, resolved that the next Congress should meet at White Plains, in the county of

Westchester, and adjourned. On the 9th of July, 1776, the newly-elected delegates met at the court-house in that place and elected General Woodhull President, and John McKesson and Robert Berrian Secretaries. During the forenoon a letter was received from the delegates of New York, in the Continental Congress, inclosing the Declaration of American Independence, which had been adopted on the 4th.

It was immediately read and referred to a committee, consisting of Messrs. Jay, Yates, Hobart, Brashier and Wm. Smith. It was a critical moment for these men. They had been just elected; only a few hours had elapsed since they had qualified and entered upon their duties, and now their first legislative act was to make up their record upon an issue which, if successful, made them patriots; if it failed, traitors and felons. How firm was their resolve; how clear their purpose; how serene their minds, is evidenced by the fact that on the afternoon of the same day the committee reported resolutions concurring in the Declaration, fully adopting it, and instructing our delegates in the General Congress to support the same, and give their united aid to all measures necessary to obtain its object.

The convention immediately adopted the report. On the morning of the next day, the 10th of July, this body "Resolved and ordered, that the style and title of this House be changed from that of the 'Provincial Congress of the Colony of New York,' to that of 'The Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York,' and thus on the 10th day of July, 1776, the State of New York was born. In the afternoon of the 10th, they resolved to enter on the 16th upon the formation of a

State government, but by that time the situation of affairs here became too alarming for deliberation. Washington was contemplating the abandonment of New York. British ships of war were anchored off Tarrytown, within six miles of where they were sitting. Their whole attention was occupied in raising troops and supplies, and providing for the public order. On the 16th they postponed the question till the 1st of August. In the meanwhile they provisionally ordained that all magistrates and civil officers, well affected toward independence, continue the exercise of their duties until further orders, except that all processes thereafter must issue in the name of the State of New York, and declared it to be treason and punishable with death for any one living within the State and enjoying the protection of its laws to adhere to the cause of the king of Great Britain or levy war against the State in his behalf.

With dangers threatening on every hand, the British fleet in possession of New York bay, the Hudson river and Long Island sound, a veteran army in overwhelming numbers but a few miles distant, thus boldly and fearlessly did the Representatives of New York assert her sovereignty. On the 27th of July the convention found it necessary to remove to Harlem, and there, on the 1st of August, on motion of Gouverneur Morris, and seconded by Mr. Duer, a committee was appointed to prepare and report a constitution or form of government.

This committee was composed of the most eminent men in the convention and in the Commonwealth. For a generation after independence was achieved a majority of them continued to receive, in positions of honor and trust, the highest marks of the confidence and affection of their

countrymen. Their labors in the Cabinet and in Congress, in the State Legislature and upon the bench, and in the diplomatic service, form the brightest pages in the history of the nation and the State.

John Jay was Chairman, and his associates were Governor Morris, Robert R. Livingston, William Duer, Abraham and Robert Yates, General Scott, Colonel Broome, Mr. Hobart, Colonel De Witt, Samuel Townshend, William Smith and Mr. Wisner. The committee were to report on the 16th of August, 1776; but such was the perilous condition of the State, and so manifold the duties of the members of the convention, that no report was made till March, 1777. The convention meanwhile, by the alarming situation of affairs, was migrating from place to place, and performing every class of public duty. It was a committee of public safety; it was providing the ways and means to continue the contest; its members were now serving in the Continental Congress, and again with the army; they were acting as Judges and negotiators. To-day they were flying before the enemy, to-morrow furnishing protection for the sorely pressed Commonwealth. At one time meeting at Kingsbridge, then at Odell's in Phillips' Manor, then at Fishkill, Poughkeepsie, and finally at Kingston. At Fishkill they supplied themselves with arms and ammunition, and thereafter legislated with their swords by their sides, literally building the peaceful fabric of constitutional government, in the very presence of the alarms, the perils and the carnage of war. On the 6th of March, 1777, at Kingston, the committee appointed to prepare a form of government were required to report on the following Wednesday, and that day, the 12th, the committee made a report which was read by Mr. Duane.

The draft was drawn by John Jay, and is in his handwriting. This draft was under discussion until the 20th of April, and underwent some amendments and additions. The leading minds in the debates, and in the introduction of the amendments adopted were John Jay, Gouverneur Morris, Robert R. Livingston and Mr. Duane. The constitution, however, was finally passed almost as it came from the hands of Mr. Jay, and was adopted with one dissenting voice on the 20th of April, 1777. It was the evening of Sunday, the President, General Ten Broeck, was absent, and also the Vice-President, General Pierre Van Cortlandt, but revolutions know neither days nor individuals. General Leonard Gansevoort, acting as President pro tem., attested the document.

The same night Robert R. Livingston, General Scott, Gouverneur Morris, Abraham Yates, John Jay and Mr. Hobart were appointed a committee to report a plan for organizing and establishing the form of government. They next directed one of the secretaries to proceed immediately to Fishkill, and have five hundred copies of the constitution, without the preamble, and twenty-five hundred with the preamble printed, and instructed him to give gratuities to the workmen to have it executed with dispatch. They then resolved that the constitution should be published on the next Tuesday, in front of the Court-house, at Kingston; and the village committee were notified to prepare for the event. This latter body seem expeditiously and economically to have performed their duty by erecting a platform upon the end of a hogshead, and from this Vice-President Van Cortlandt presiding, Robert Berrian, one of the secretaries, read this immortal document to the assembled people. The convention hav-

ing promulgated their ordinance for the formation of the State government, and filled up, provisionally, the offices necessary for carrying it on until an election could be had, and appointed thirteen of their number to act as a committee of safety until the Legislature should assemble, adjourned *sine die* on the 13th of May, 1777. Thus passed into history this remarkable convention. In lofty patriotism, steadfastness of purpose, practical wisdom and liberal statesmanship it had few, if any, equals, even among the legislative bodies of extraordinary merit which marked the era. Its address to the people, drafted by Jay, and declared by Jefferson the ablest document of the period, is a most compact and eloquent statement of the fundamental principles of free government, and was republished by Congress for the whole country, and translated into foreign tongues. Of the many distinguished men who were its members, three stand out conspicuously, and form an unequalled triumvirate of social distinction, character, culture and intellect. They were John Jay, Gouverneur Morris and Robert R. Livingston. All young men, possessing the best education of the time, belonging to the wealthiest families in the State, by birth and opportunity certain of royal favor, and having the largest stake in loyalty and stable government. They yet risked all, and periled their lives, for civil liberty and self-government. John Jay became Governor and cabinet minister and foreign envoy, and the first Chief Justice of the United States. Gouverneur Morris distinguished himself in the councils of the nation and the diplomatic service of the country. Robert R. Livingston rendered the most eminent services, both to this State and the United States, and in foreign courts.

Their examples, efforts and contributions in educating and nerving the colonies to the Declaration of Independence, in the events which led to the recognition of the Republic, and in moulding the internal regulations and foreign policy of the new government, are the special pride of New York and the glory of the nation. No one can to-day read the Constitution of 1777, without wondering how little we have been able to improve upon it in one hundred years. When we consider that purely representative government was then an almost untried experiment, this instrument becomes more and more an enduring monument to the wisdom and foresight of its framers. It begins with a preamble setting forth the causes which led to the formation of a separate government, and the authority conferred upon the convention by the people to do this work. It recites at length the Declaration of Independence, and the unanimous resolution of the convention on the 9th of July, 1776, indorsing the declaration and instructing the New York delegates in the Continental Congress to give it their support. By virtue of which several acts and recitals, says the preamble "All power whatever in the State hath reverted to the people thereof, and this Convention hath, by their suffrages and free choice, been appointed and authorized to institute and establish such a government as they shall deem best calculated to secure the rights and liberties of the good people of this State."

Its first section, which was unanimously agreed to, is the key-note of its spirit. It ordained, determined and declared that no authority, on any pretense whatever, should be exercised over the people or members of this State, but such as should be derived from and granted by the *people*.

The declarations of 1683 were to secure for British colonists every liberty granted by the crown to the British subject. The purpose of the men of 1777 was to substitute the popular will for the royal prerogative, and natural rights for charters wrung from the reluctant hands of hereditary power.

Their experience with the colonial Governors had made them jealous and suspicious of individual authority, and so, to prevent the passage of laws inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution, or the public good, they placed the veto power in the hands of a council of revision, consisting of the Governor, the Chancellor, and the Judges of the Supreme Court.

All bills passed by the Legislature were to be submitted to them, and their veto was absolute, unless the bill was repassed by two-thirds of each House.

It followed the English model in its Legislature, and created two bodies, Senate and Assembly, and vested in them all legislative power. The Senate, twenty-four in number, was to be elected for four years by the freeholders of their districts having freeholds of the value of over one hundred pounds, and the Assembly of seventy members for one year, by freeholders possessing freeholds of the value of twenty pounds, or renting tenements of the yearly value of twenty shillings and paying taxes. Provision was made for increasing both branches, but the Senate was never to exceed one hundred or the Assembly three hundred. It was the universal belief of the time that those who paid the taxes and supported the government should govern. Universal suffrage was not deemed an inherent right, but a privilege to be hedged about with restrictions and limitations, and while we have enlarged the limit, our

legislation has always held to the theory, until recently, as to people of color, and still as to women, and minors, and others. It was the change of sentiment on this great question which led to the convention and new constitution of 1821. The executive power was vested in a Governor and Lieutenant-Governor to be chosen for three years, and to this term we have returned by an amendment adopted in 1874. The judicial power was vested in a Chancellor, and Judges of the Supreme Court; and local county courts and a probate judiciary were constituted, and they respectively held during good behavior, and until sixty-five years of age; while a final appellate court, both in law and equity, was formed by the Senate, the Chancellor, and the Judges of the Supreme Court. Says the most eminent authority of our time: "The first New York Judiciary administered public justice and protected private rights during the whole period of its existence, in a manner which satisfied our people and won applause from all disinterested observers."

The appointing power was vested in a council of appointment, consisting of four senators, selected annually by the Assembly who, with the Governor, were to form the council. To this body was given the appointment and removal of all officers in the State, except the chancellor, judges of the supreme court, and first judges of counties. As the State increased in wealth and population, the power and patronage of this council became enormous. It controlled the politics of the Commonwealth for forty years, and, at the time of its abolishment, had within its gift fifteen thousand offices. Such parts of the common law of England and the statute law of Great Britain and the colony of New York, not inconsistent with the independ-

ence of the State, as were in force on the 19th day of April, 1775, were declared to be the law of New York, thus deliberately fixing in the fundamental law the day when the British soldiers fired upon the patriots at Lexington as the close forever of the supremacy of British authority.

The manner of voting was the subject of much discussion in the convention. The object was to get the freest and most unbiased expression of the popular will. At first the advocates of the *viva voce* vote seem to have had the majority; but this convention was wonderfully free from prejudice, or pride of opinion, or slavery to precedent. As stated in the constitution, their object was to do that which best "would tend to preserve the liberty and equal freedom of the people." They were willing to fairly try any reasonable experiment. While the vote by ballot was negatived by two-thirds, a compromise was adopted by thirty-three to three, ordaining that, after the termination of the war, the Legislature should provide for all elections by ballot, and if, after full and fair trial, it was found less conducive to the safety and interest of the State, the *viva voce* practice might be restored. In 1787, the requisite law was enacted for voting by ballot, and that method has continued ever since.

The question of religious tolerance excited great interest and the longest debate. By personal experience and family tradition these men were very familiar with the results of bigotry and intolerance. With the exception of Holland, there was scarcely a place in the world where religious freedom was permitted. John Jay, true to his Huguenot recollections and training, threw the weight of his great influence and ability on the side of restriction. He moved to

“except the professors of the religion of the church of Rome, until they should take oath that they verily believed that no pope, priest, or foreign authority hath power to absolve the subjects of the State from allegiance, and unless they renounced the false, wicked and damnable doctrine that the pope has power to absolve men from their sins,” this having been voted down by nineteen to ten, it was then moved, “that this toleration shall not extend to justify the professors of any religion in disturbing the peace or violating the laws of this State,” this too was rejected, and the convention, to their immortal honor and glory, established liberty of conscience in these memorable words: “This convention doth in the name and by the authority of the good people of this State, *ordain, determine* and *declare*, that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever hereafter be allowed within this State to all mankind.” Thomas Jefferson forced a like expression from Virginia, but with that exception: New York alone among the thirteen States began its existence with absolute and untrammelled religious liberty.

The Constitution provided for the naturalization of foreigners, for trial by jury, for a militia service with recognition of the Quakers, and for the protection of Indians within the State limits. Acts of attainder were prohibited, no person was to be disfranchised, except by law of the land or the judgment of his peers; freedom of debate in legislative bodies was secured; parties impeached or indicted for crimes were to be allowed counsel as in civil cases, and the Legislature were prohibited from instituting any court except such as should proceed according to the course of the common law. Pause for a moment

and reflect upon the conditions under which this Constitution was prepared and adopted. Its framers in perpetual peril of their lives, at some period during their deliberations, every county in the State invaded by the enemy, devoting most of their time to the public defense and the protection of their families, without precedent to guide them, save the English model, their own experience, and thoughtful study of the principles of liberty. "Our Constitution," said Mr. Jay in his letter to the President of the Convention, "is universally approved even in New England, where few New York productions have credit." The verdict of posterity is unanimous and emphatic, that it deserves a high place among the few immortal documents which attest and determine the progress of the people, and the growth and defense of human liberty. Its principal features were incorporated into the Constitution of the United States, and followed by a majority of the new Commonwealths, which from time to time were admitted into the Union. The men whose virtues we celebrate here to-day, did not build better than they knew. It is the crowning merit of their work that it fulfilled its purpose. The peril of their position, the time, nearly the darkest and most hopeless of the revolution, so purified their actions and intensified their thoughts, that reason became almost prophecy. The brilliance of the promise is equaled by the splendor of the performance. The salient principles of the old Constitution underlie the new, and every present effort to abandon other experiments and restore the ancient forms, is the best tribute posterity can pay to the marvelous wisdom of the members of our first State Convention. The Constitution of 1777 remained in force for over forty years, and then with some minor modi-

fications, the extension of suffrage, and the concentration of more power in the Governor, it continued substantially unchanged until 1846. The public improvements of the State, its growth in population, and local necessities demanded some amendments, and to provide for the public debt, and limit the debt contracting power, and to enlarge the Judiciary, the Convention of 1846 was called together. While preserving many of the essential features of the old Constitution, this Convention made changes which radically altered our scheme of State administration. The Governor was stripped of nearly all power, the authority of the Legislature was restricted, and appointments to office, and local administration given directly to the people. The whole civil service, which for seventy years had been appointed by the Council of Appointment and the Governor and Senate, was reduced to elective offices. The judiciary, which had been selected by the Executive, and held its place during good behavior, was submitted to popular nomination and election, and very short terms of service. The whole instrument is a protest against the concentration of power in any branch of the government, and a demand for its surrender at the shortest possible intervals by the Executive, the legislative and the judicial officers, back again to the people. It cut up and subdivided, for the election of the Legislature, the large districts, with their guarantee of larger men for representatives, and made statesmanship difficult in proportion as it multiplied the opportunities and increased the influence of the local politician. It so widely distributed official authority and responsibility that each soldier of a vast army of placemen was accountable only to the hazards of a re-election at the end of a brief term, and the

Governor was the head of an administration beyond the reach of appointment, removal or control by him. The wisdom of the revolution, especially in the judiciary, has never ceased to be doubted, and within the past five years, by duly adopted amendments, more permanency and dignity have been given to our higher and appellate courts, by reorganizing them upon a more harmonious basis, with more symmetry and concentration, and longer terms of service. The tendency of recent Constitutional reform has been to old methods in respect to the Executive, both in regard to his length of service and general powers, and happily to drive from the Legislature special legislation for the benefit of individuals, corporations or localities, and compel the enactment of such general laws as will bear equally in both grant and limitation upon all, giving to none the exclusive benefits and franchises of the State. But the methods provided by the Constitution of 1846 to preserve the credit of New York, to reform and simplify the practice and codify the laws, are worthy of all praise, and have been adopted by a large number of the other States. Let us hope that very soon our fundamental law may be still further amended to stop the increase of local and municipal debt, the source and fountain of extravagance, speculation and fraud, and the greatest curse of our time.

This brief review of our constitutional history leads naturally to an inquiry as to what practical results have been obtained by these principles and plans of government. The first election for State officers and members of the Legislature was held in June, 1777, in all the counties not in possession of the enemy, by the officers appointed by the convention. A majority of the council of safety sought to

control the matter by nominating Philip Schuyler for Governor, and George Clinton for Lieutenant-Governor. As Jay said, in proclaiming these nominations: "Our Constitution is universally approved and does honor to our State. Let us not lose our credit in committing the government of it to men inadequate to the task. These gentlemen are respectable abroad. Their attachment to the cause is confessed and their abilities unquestionable. Let us endeavor to be as unanimous as possible."

Notwithstanding this powerful nomination, forty-one candidates ran, 13,179 votes were cast, and General George Clinton was elected both Governor and Lieutenant-Governor. He resigned the latter office, and General Pierre Van Cortlandt, as President of the Senate, became Lieutenant-Governor.

The newly-elected Governor was cast in the mould of the sternest and most inflexible patriotism. The highest office in the gift of the people had come to him unsolicited, but he hesitated long before accepting it. Regardless of personal sacrifice or ambition, he wanted first clearly to see whether his duty to the cause could be best performed in the field or the executive chair. The council of safety, restive under their great responsibilities, demanded that he immediately leave his command and assume the helm of State.

Washington and Putnam advised his acceptance, and among the expressions of opinion from all quarters, the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church, at Kingston, addressed him a most earnest appeal and congratulation. "From the beginning of the present war," they said, "the Consistory and people of Kingston have uniformly been attached to the cause of America, and justify, upon the

soundest principles of religion and morality, the glorious revolution of a free and oppressed country. Take then, with the acclamation and fullest confidence of the public—take, sir, the government into your hands, and let the unsolicited voice of the whole State prevail upon you to enter upon this arduous task. The Consistory esteem themselves especially happy in having cause to believe that religious liberty, without which all other privileges are not worth enjoying, will be strenuously supported by your Excellency.”

He yielded his own judgment to the universal anxiety, and the 30th of July, 1777, was fixed for the inauguration. And so, one hundred years ago to day, upon this spot, the council of safety surrendered its powers, General George Clinton was inaugurated Governor, and the State of New York, under a constitution and duly organized government, began its history. He came from the very presence of the enemy to assume the robes of office, to return to his post when the ceremony was over, and the proclamation which made him Governor, General and Commander of the Militia and Admiral of the Navy of the State, was the first State paper bearing the startling attest “God save the People.” Forts Clinton and Montgomery were attacked in the Highlands, Herkimer was battling in the Valley of the Mohawk, Burgoyne was marching from the north, and it was months before he could summon from the field and gather in council the first Legislature.

New York had but two hundred thousand people; was without manufactories or internal improvements, and hemmed in and invaded on every side by hostile fleets and armies. One hundred years have passed, and to-day in the sisterhood of States, she is the empire in all that con-

stitutes a great Commonwealth. An industrious, intelligent and prosperous population of five millions of people live within her borders. In the value of her farms and farm products, and in her manufacturing industries, she is the first State in the Union. She sustains over one thousand newspapers and periodicals, has eighty millions invested in church property, and spends twelve millions of dollars a year upon popular education. Upward of three hundred academies and colleges fit her youth for special professions and furnish opportunities for liberal learning and the highest culture, and stately edifices all over the State, dedicated to humane and benevolent objects, exhibit the permanence and extent of her organized charities.

There are three hundred millions of dollars in her savings banks. Three hundred millions in her insurance companies, and five hundred millions in the capital and loans of her State and National Banks. Six thousand miles of railroads, costing six hundred millions of dollars, have penetrated and developed every accessible corner of the State, and maintain against all rivalry and competition her commercial prestige.

In 1825 a cannon was fired upon the Battery in New York city, in response to the reverberations of the guns from Sandy Hook, its echoes were caught and repeated by another shot at the Palisades, and so from Tappan Zee to the Highlands, and along the Catskills and the valley of the Mohawk, and past the falls of the Genesee, till lost over the lake at Buffalo, the thunders of artillery announced, in one hour and twenty minutes, the whole length of the State, that the waters of the lake had been wedded to the ocean, and the Erie canal was completed. It marked a new era in the prosperity of the State and the

history of the nation. It sent the tide of emigration to the northwest, developing there great agricultural States, and added immensely to the wealth of New York. All honor and gratitude to the men who at that early day had the courage and foresight to plan and pursue these great public improvements, and whose wisdom has been proven by a repetition of the lessons of the ages, that along the highways of commerce reside population, wealth, civilization and power. The glory of each State is the common property of the nation, and we make this day our centennial exhibit. Our inquiry has shown that we need not step beyond our own boundaries to find illustrious annals and noble examples. We are rich in battle-fields, decisive in results upon the freedom of the nation.

Jay, Morris and Livingston, Schuyler and Montgomery, Clinton and Herkimer, Hamilton and Kent, are names which will live among the soldiers, patriots and sages of all time. In every crisis of its history, the virtue, courage and wisdom of the people have been equal to the needs of the present and the wants of the future.

Let us welcome the second century and enter upon its duties with the stern purpose and high resolve to maintain the standard of our fathers in the public and private life of the State and the honorable superiority of New York in the Federal Union.

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